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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003286

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: VICE PRESIDENT HASHIMI UNVEILS SOCIAL COMPACT
FOLLOWING MEETING WITH SISTANI

REF: A. BAGHDAD 3222 (HASHIMI AND AMBASSADOR CROCKER)

[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 3162 (HASHIMI AND POLCOUNS)

[1](#)C. FBIS GMP20070928642002 (TEXT OF NATIONAL COMPACT)

[1](#)D. FBIS GMP20070927648003 (HASHIMI PRESS CONF
POST-SISTANI MTG)

Classified by Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b)
and (d).

Summary and Comment

[1](#)1. (C) During a Baghdad press conference on September 26, Vice President Tariq al Hashimi unveiled his draft "Iraqi National Compact" document, aimed at creating a new "vision" for Iraq. One day after its public circulation, Hashimi made a highly publicized trip to meet Grand Ayatollah Sistani in Najaf, reportedly receiving the cleric's endorsement for the Compact. Hashimi has widely circulated the document which contains an introduction, a list of 25 "principles," and ideas on how to reach national consensus on those principles.

Left out of the document circulated to the media (but shared with the Embassy and others) are two options for the Compact's implementation: early elections or substantial overhaul of the current government. Hashimi hopes the document will stimulate national debate on governance and reconciliation, and is looking for a favorable USG reaction. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, the compact has fed PM Maliki's long-standing conviction that Hashimi is not a true political partner, as expressed to the Ambassador in a September 29 meeting (septel). While we can welcome some elements of Hashimi's vision, overall we will tell him and others that by calling for a change of government, he has made traction on the "Compact" unlikely.

[1](#)2. (C) Hashimi's Compact launch is a sharp pull on the plug keeping the 3 1 mechanism on life support. The deep and mutual distrust between PM Maliki and VP Hashimi makes it extremely difficult to envision movement forward on reconciliation with this leadership team in place. Release of the Compact was timed to highlight the stalemate in national government, and to corner Maliki. While Hashimi may have calculated that his Compact would cast him in the role of statesman in contrast to the Prime Minister, the actual impact will be to highlight Maliki's assertion that he has no Sunni partner, just Sunni opposition. It is increasingly clear that for both of them the political calculus is absolutely zero-sum. Since neither Hashimi nor Maliki appear ready to compromise with the other, it will require our efforts to find a way to broker an arrangement that at a minimum will allow filling critical Cabinet vacancies so the government can focus on the horribly neglected task of governance. Hashimi's staff insist to us in private that Tawafuq would return to government if Maliki made "any effort" to reach out on its list of 11 demands. It may be too late for that. In Maliki's view, Hashimi has pocketed

every offer and upped his demands. With the confidence Maliki feels post-September review, he probably believes he can select more pliant Sunni partners and marginalize Tawafuq. End summary and Comment.

Public Launch of the "National Compact"

13. (C) Vice President Tariq al Hashimi held a press conference on September 26 to unveil his new draft "Iraqi National Contract," a three-page document that includes an introduction, a list of 25 "principles," and six suggestions for reaching national consensus on the list of principles (Text in Ref C). Missing from the document given to the media (but shared privately with the Embassy and others), were a pair of options for implementing the compact: early elections, or a major overhaul of executive and legislative institutions (Ref A/B). Hashimi, reading from a prepared statement, told the press that his draft was intended to help "arrest the deteriorating situation in Iraq by eradicating its causes." His staff told us earlier that President Talabani offered his (non-written) endorsement to Hashimi, and that many regional governments had offered their endorsements during Hashimi's August travel.

Sistani Endorsement?

14. (C) Iraqi Islamist Party deputy leader Ayad Al Samaraie and a senior Hashimi staffer provided poloff on September 29 with a readout of the Vice President's September 27 meeting with Grand Ayatollah Ali Al Sistani in Najaf (Ref D). The meeting, they said, lasted for two hours, an hour longer than

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scheduled. Topics of discussion were Hashimi's "Compact," detainees, militias, and elections. Sistani reportedly offered his endorsement in principle on the Compact, offering only "minor" edits. (Comment: Sistani does not speak publicly; his representative Abd al-Mahdi al Karbala'i said of the Hashimi visit in a September 28 sermon only that Sistani is "the protector of the interests of all Iraqis.") According to Hashimi's staffer, Sistani's son Mohammed Ridha al Sistani attended the meeting, and was a dominant force, doing much of the talking. At one point, the son explained how his father encouraged Maliki to do more on GOI detainee releases. The PM reportedly balked, stating that the government had "intelligence information" on all the detainees, which explained their lengthy incarcerations. Hashimi appealed to Sistani to continue pressuring Maliki on detainee issues, to which Sistani reportedly committed to "studying." In a discussion on militias, Sistani conveyed his position that only the State has the right to bear weapons, not militia members. On elections, Sistani said his election fatwa had been "misused." He told Hashimi that he had not endorsed any particular party, but rather encouraged people to vote for the person who would "best protect voters' religion and worldly goods."

15. (C) In general, Hashimi's staff member said, the meeting/trip was "very good" as it convinced the IIP/Sunni side that Sistani was quite practical and reasonable. Second, the meeting provided Sistani with "a more realistic picture of Sunni thinking" than some of his Shia colleagues may have conveyed. Vice President Hashimi, he said, was "positively affected" by the meeting. The staff member said Sistani told Hashimi that he feared Iraq may "soon be lost, as Andalusia was lost." Sistani also lamented to Hashimi that he was "not being listened to;" possibly referring to the Sadrists and others within the Unified Iraqi Coalition. Other parties seeking Sistani's endorsement for a new governing coalition report varying levels of endorsement as well, further complicating a political dynamic where virtually every party is engaged in talks with every other

party in hopes of coming out on the "winning" side.
CROCKER